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Conference Abstract

Think of Me When I Am Gone: Assessing Faculty Archives at the Yale Peabody Museum

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Abstract

For universities with museums and galleries, the inevitability of faculty retirements, departures, and passings is a challenge for collection managers. The preservation and retrieval of archival field records and research is critical to the documentation of museum collections. Unfortunately, there are no expectations for faculty members to donate their personal papers to the museums which curate their collections. The potential to lose essential data, such as provenance information, stresses the importance of tackling these problems early. All too often, decisions about retention of these materials are made by uninformed academic departments or family heirs, and these decisions can be detrimental to the future value of museum collections. The best solution is to be proactive and work with the professor or researcher and academic departments before they are gone.

The Harold C. and Jean M. Conklin Archives at the Yale Peabody Museum will be used as a case study to illustrate the efforts necessary by an institution to preserve vital supporting documentation to its collections. Conklin was a Professor of Anthropology at Yale, a Curator at the Peabody, and a researcher in the field of Southeast Asian studies for over six decades.

Keywords

field records, data, provenance, research, documentation, archives

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